

Mission

The mission of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is to support the organizations and communities that work every day to put an end to youth homelessness, adolescent pregnancy and domestic violence.

Purpose

In the Fall of 2008, the Family and Youth Services Bureau launched its Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth, or SSRHY, demonstration in three states, Colorado, Iowa, and Minnesota. The following year, three additional states -- Oklahoma, Nebraska and Vermont -- were added. The demonstration's purpose was to explore ways to improve the delivery of services and supports to youth in rural communities who have little or no connection to stable housing and family situations. This includes runaway and homeless youth as well as youth making unsuccessful transitions out of foster care.

History

In Section 302 (6) of the 2008 amendment to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Congress found that "improved coordination and collaboration between the Federal Programs that serve runaway and homeless youth are necessary for the development of a long-term strategy for responding to the needs of this population." In response, the Family and Youth Services Bureau created the Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth demonstration.

Demonstration Design

The overarching goal of the collaboration is to increase connections for youth in three critical areas of development:

- *Survival Support Services*, including housing, healthcare, substance abuse, and/or mental health.
- *Community*, including community service, youth and adult partnerships, mentoring, and peer support groups.
- *Education/Employment*, including high school/GED completion, post-secondary education, employment, training, and/or jobs.

Major Themes

The demonstration is designed around several major themes:

State/Local Collaboration: The demonstration requires collaboration between the grantee states, a selected local collaborating partner in an identified rural community, and additional agencies or organizations that may be necessary in supporting the goals of the demonstration. The local collaborating partner must be a FYSB-funded organization that is providing services to rural youth in Transitional Living (TLP) and Independent Living Programs (ILP).

Positive Youth Development (PYD): Grantees must adhere to five key elements generally regarded as "core" components of PYD:

- Healthy messages to adolescents about their bodies, their behaviors and their interactions
- Safe and structured places for teens to study, recreate, and socialize
- Strengthened relationships with adult role models, such as parents, mentors, coaches or community leaders and peers
- Skill development in literacy, competence, work readiness and social skills
- Opportunities to serve others and build self-esteem

Youth Leadership: The projects emphasize youth participation and leadership development in the planning, organization and implementation of all strategies and activities.

Learning Communities: FYSB views each local project as a "learning laboratory" from which the grantee states and communities will extract lessons about capacity-building and effective practices in the coordination and delivery of services to TLP and ILP young people in rural areas. Such lessons will be used to inform future policies and programs at the local, State and national levels.

Evaluation

The SSRHY demonstration has been constructed in two phases: a 1-year planning phase and a 4-year implementation phase. During the planning year, FYSB will work with state grantees, local collaborating partners and other key agencies and organizations to design an evaluation process that will enable grantees to periodically assess progress throughout the demonstration, culminating with a comprehensive, final evaluation to be completed in Year 5.

Grantee Cohort 1 - Project Period: 9/30/2008 to 9/29/2013

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Grantee Cohort 2 - Project Period: 9/30/2009 to 9/29/2014

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